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LETTER DATED 21 AUGUST 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF RWANDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions of my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith the position of the Rwanda Government on the deteriorating situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Since 2 August 1998, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has experienced instability characterized by a generalized rebellion pitting the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL) against the leadership and the person of President Laurent Kabila.

Members of the Alliance and other Congolese accuse Mr. Kabila of, among other things:

- Incapacity and unwillingness to restore peace, security, unity and stability to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the subregion;
- Deliberately promoting divisions within the Congolese National Army by forming private and tribally based militias;
- Repressive policies, targeting all democratic forces, characterized by collective massacres and assassinations, incarceration of political dissidents, discrimination and gross violations of human rights;
- Inciting violence and promoting ethnic hatred.

Clearly these accusations define the parameters of the Congolese crisis and demonstrate the internal and political nature of the conflict. Therefore, the accusation that Rwanda and other countries have invaded the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a malicious and gratuitous lie. The state of war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is regrettable and that is why the Government of Rwanda urges all Congolese people to work towards a political solution. We call for an immediate ceasefire, followed by an all-party conference and the establishment of all-inclusive transitional institutions. This would give the Congolese people an opportunity to manage the crisis on their own and would bring about a quick end to the current instability.

Essentially there are two categories of stakeholders in the Congolese conflict. The principal stakeholders are the Congolese people themselves.

Peace and stability in the Congo is the primary responsibility of the Congolese people. As pointed out, they should be helped and encouraged to come to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The immediate neighbours and others, who constitute the second category, should be helping in this process. Stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo benefits not only that country, but also its neighbours and Rwanda in particular.

Unfortunately, certain States members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have decided to support President Kabila and not the Congolese people, by sending miliary forces to his rescue. This was done in total disregard of the 8 August 1998 Victoria Falls Summit decision to send a ministerial fact-finding mission to the region. The mission was pre-empted and its conclusions have been biased by the military decisions taken in Harare by the Ministers of Defence present on 18 August 1998. This pursuit of parallel initiatives by the same convenor is not only wrong in principle but is fraudulent in nature.

Other regional organizations such as the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL) have long-standing security arrangements with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These should not be ignored.

Rwanda has a specific interest in the stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, arising from our own security concerns. These concerns stem from the presence of ex-Rwandan soldiers and Interahamwe militia and their continued use of the Congolese territory as a rear base to launch attacks against the people of Rwanda.

We wish to state that the problems of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are not a preserve of SADC. Other countries, immediate neighbours of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, such as Uganda, Burundi, the Congo, Central African Republic and Rwanda, which are not necessarily SADC members, have a bigger stake in the stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo than most SADC member States. Therefore, all these countries should have been consulted.

The military involvement of certain SADC countries in the current crisis of the Democratic Republic of the Congo clearly does not promote a peaceful resolution to the conflict. By its very nature, it can only serve the narrow interest of the leaders spearheading the intervention. It serves neither the interests of the Congolese people, nor those of the region as a whole.

Rwanda therefore reserves the right to get involved and to assist the Congolese people in their search for a lasting solution in whatever manner it deems appropriate.

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Gideon KAYINAMURA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of
Rwanda to the United Nations